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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to improve the self-esteem and self-confidence of black, largely lower-class sixth-graders at a middle school in a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood. Students were exposed to multicultural resources, including works of literature by and about African-Americans. A cultural awareness workshop for teachers was also held. Parent participation and involvement was encouraged through weekly telephone conversations and two parent-teacher conferences. Black role models from the local community were brought in to serve as guest speakers. Various classroom activities were undertaken to promote teamwork, cooperation, and cultural awareness among the black, white, Asian, and Hispanic students. A posttest survey of students and teachers found that 24 of the 25 black students in the experimental group said that they liked school, 20 of the 25 said that they felt comfortable in the school, and 17 reported feeling a sense of belonging. The five teachers involved all reported that the self-esteem and self-confidence of the black students had increased. Three appendices provide copies of the student and teacher surveys. (Contains 20 references.) (MDM)

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ED 386 317

Improving Black Students' Self Esteem, Self Confidence, and Pride Through Parental Participation, Teacher and Student Education.

by

Phyllis Chandler

Cluster 60

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A Practicum 1 Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA
1995

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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This practicum report was submitted by Phyllis Chandler under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

6-12-95 Georgianna Lowen
Date of Final Approval of Report Georgianna Lowen Ed.D, Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Improving black students' self esteem, self confidence, and pride through parental participation, teacher and student education. Chandler, Phyllis A., 1995: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. School Management and Instructional Leadership.

This practicum was designed to improve black, sixth grade students' self esteem, self confidence, and pride by establishing a comfortable school environment where the students feel a sense of belonging. To accomplish this, the involvement of students, teachers, parents, and the community, was necessary.

The writer also introduced all the students to the diverse cultures and their uniqueness, through exposure to various literature. Although the main focus was on the students, teachers, too, were educated about the many cultures through a workshop held at the school's location. More parental involvement was essential through weekly phone calls, conferences, and visits to the classroom. This was backed up with parents being more involved at home by helping students with homework and reading.

The analysis of the implementation showed that students felt better about themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their school environment, as a whole.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Community

The community in which the school is located consists of mostly middle-class, middle income families. There are two public libraries that together house over 25 thousand books. There is also a Bookmobile which serves the surrounding communities. Parks and Recreational facilities also surround the community, along with eighteen churches of different denominations. Approximately six clubs and organizations are available to early adolescents.

The target group is bused into the school's community. Most of the students come from a poor neighborhood where the residents face socio-economic problems. Many of the households consist of several siblings and are headed by single parents, mostly maternal. The care-taker is either a mother or grandmother. The frequent changing of a male caretaker within the home is common. Many of the parents have had little education. In this neighborhood, there are no flower gardens and no white picket fences.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer, a sixth grade English teacher, with a bachelor and master's degree in English, has been teaching at the school for six years. For two years the writer has also been an adjunct professor in English for a local college. At the target middle school, the writer is the English teacher of a team that comprises a social studies teacher, a science teacher, a mathematics teacher, and a reading teacher. The classrooms for the students on this team are in close proximity, so students are more or less in a localized vicinity in the school, except when they go to another area for their elective class. The teachers on the team have a common planning period where they meet to discuss student concerns.

The middle school in which the writer teaches consists of 1730 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Of this number, 939 are male, and 791 are female.

The distribution of students by Racial/Ethnic groups is:

White	1037
Black	400
Hispanic	236
Asian	56
Indian	1

The school consists of 66 full time teachers, four administrators and 29 support staff.

The distribution of teachers by Racial/Ethnic group is:

	Male	Female
White	13	43
Black	1	8
Hispanic	0	1
Asian	0	0
Indian	0	0

The school also has various programs to meet the students with special needs.

The Gifted Program

Students can qualify for this program through recommendations and evaluations. There are 48 students in this program.

Students With Mild Disabilities

In this grouping there are categories such as specific learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, visually handicapped, and physically handicapped. Students receive this service on a part-time or full-time basis.

Students With Moderate or Severe Disabilities

In this grouping there are categories such as mentally handicapped, autism, and severely emotionally disturbed. These students receive this service on a full time basis.

Limited English Proficient Student

The program is for students who have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language. Students with any one of these problems, may enroll in English for Speakers of Others Languages (ESOL).

Financial Information

The school receives local, state, and federal funds. 45.4% of the school's funds are received locally. 48.8% of the funds are received from the State, and 5.8% of the funds are received from the Federal government.

Expenditure Per Student

Regular Programs	$3,596
Exceptional Programs	$8,020
At-Risk Programs	$4,356
Vocational Programs	$3,628

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The majority of the black students at the writer's work location, were bused into the school which is located in a predominantly white neighborhood. Many of tne 25 target students came from poor neighborhoods, where most members of the households had little education and faced socio-economic problems. The members of these households had many everyday predicaments to contend with that involved keeping food on the table to feed the family.

As the students came into a middle class neighborhood to attend school, they encountered peers who not only appeared to be financially better off but academically better off, as well. The students, who lived in the school's neighborhood, were dressed in the latest fashion. Many times they were also receiving better grades. Having to confront this feeling of inferiority on a daily basis was having a negative effect on the target students. The target group, for lack of parental guidance and involvement, did not know how to handle the various differences they encountered in school. Therefore, they adopted negative attitudes towards their peers, their teachers, and negative feeling about themselves.

The distribution of internal suspension by Racial/Ethnic group is:

	Male	Female
White	151	47
Black	106	53
Hispanic	38	11
Asian	4	0
Indian	0	0

The distribution of external suspension by Racial/Ethnic group is:

	Male	Female
White	82	26
Black	91	35
Hispanic	19	7
Asian	1	0
Indian	0	0

Problem Documentation

The children were given a pretest which identified the discomfort, inferiority, and hopelessness that the students felt at the school.

In response to liking the school, 18 of the students claimed that they did not like it, while seven of them said they liked it but noted, "just a little." When asked about feeling comfortable at this school, the students' results were basically in the same

area: 6 students felt comfortable and 19 did not. Of the 25 students surveyed, 22 of them felt a sense of not belonging, while three felt a sense of belonging. None of the students said they felt inferior at the school, but some noted that the white students thought they were better than the black students were. All of the students said that they associated with mostly black students. However, 20 of them felt that their white peers treated them differently than their black counterparts. Although 10 of the students liked their peers, 13, however only tolerated them, while two did not like them. When asked the question of how many of their teachers were black, all 25 students said 0-1. Eight of the 25 students felt that 2-4 of their teachers encouraged them to do their work, while 15 students believed 0-1 teacher encouraged them. Two students thought that 5-6, most of their teachers, encouraged them to do their work.

Causative Analysis

There were many underlying reasons why individuals acted the way they did. Some of these reasons surfaced; others went undetected. One of the reasons that the target group reacted the way it did was because of a decision made many years ago by their fore fathers. That decision was to integrate schools. At that particular time, integration seemed feasible as well as logical, since many of the schools in poor neighborhoods were receiving

minimal funds. However, the damage that integration had done was surfacing. Black students from poor neighborhoods were being bused into schools in the middle to upper class neighborhoods where they had to compete with other students, socially and academically.

Dealing with these differences was one reason why the target group had adopted negative attitudes. The black students were confronted with a feeling of inferiority on a daily basis. Unlike their peers, their parents could not afford the fancy clothes, the money for the field trips, or the money to pay for extra tutoring, if the need had arisen. Therefore, the target group felt subordinate because on many occasions they had nothing to compete with. This group usually consisted of the persons remaining at school on days of field trips pretending that they had no interest in going on the trip.

To make matters worse, there was a shortage of black role models in the school. The target group needed black role models to look up to and be proud of. Having a scarcity of black professionals in prominent positions in the school, was sending the wrong message to the black students. These students needed something to work towards; they needed a goal, and most of all, they needed to witness blacks in prestigious positions.

Because of the type of backgrounds that the students had, there was little parental encouragement and involvement in the school. Many of the parents were at home looking after other siblings or working to support the family. These situations left

them little time to attend parent-teacher conferences, advisory meetings, or even open house. For the same reasons, the parents did not have the time to spend with their children helping them with homework. This lack of involvement affected the students, as they did not have the support at home or any one to encourage them to do homework or to do well in school.

Teachers' expectancies of the target students also played a role in the students' behavior. Because the target students were unfamiliar with strategies on how to handle certain problems that arose, or were uncertain of ways to react when situations were not going the way they wanted them to, they reacted in ways that caused them to get into trouble. The teachers witnessing this type of behavior on a daily basis began to expect this type of behavior from these particular students.

Another problem with the teachers' expectancies, was that most of the teachers whom the students encountered, were of culturally different backgrounds. They, the teachers, were not familiar with the problems that the students regularly faced, and because of ignorance, they tended to have low expectations of the target group.

The make up of the school's curriculum was also to blame. This curriculum was not designed to meet the needs of all students, since it had minimal correlation to minority students. The text books used did not depict the lives of all students but rather the lives of the middle to upper class families.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The aim of all schools is to promote learning. Many factors, however, must come into play before learning can actually take place. It is essential that schools' curricula be designed to reflect all forms of learning and that the environment be one that is conducive to and promotes learning for all students.

Since the primary purpose of the school is to educate all students, it is necessary that this education be presented in many forms. The schools' curricula should be designed to enhance students' development academically, culturally, socially, and morally. Because students spend at least seven hours a day in the classroom, the majority of their learning take place in the school environment. This learning is gained directly and indirectly through teachers and peers.

According to Manning (1989) the developmental period for students in the middle school is a crucial one. Students at this age, are very concerned about how others perceive them and their culture. To them their self worth and self image are at stake. Manning suggests that the classroom environment be one that promotes cultural experiences and opportunities for all children.

In order for students to be fully educated it is necessary for them to be acculturated. If they are not acculturated, they will never be ready when they leave school for a society that is so culturally diverse. Hirsch (1987) believes that the nation is

doing a great disservice to its students by not acculturating them. The importance of being culturally educated should not go unnoticed. Because schools are so culturally diverse, it is vital that the curricula implement acculturation. Hirsch also believes that students who are illiterate culturally cannot understand or judge what they are told. This, therefore, makes it impossible for them to be in par with their culturally literate peers.

Hirsch also thinks that another reason why some students are not culturally literate, or would have a difficult time becoming culturally literate, is because of the system of tracking. This system tracks students by ability levels. Therefore, the students are with the same group of people and are not able to learn from others who may be culturally literate. The system of tracking concentrates on skills rather than content, and students are being taught the basic skills. The system of tracking does injustice to many students. Students not only learn from their teachers, but also from their peers, and when students of the same background and experiences are grouped together, peer cultural learning is not present.

Tracking has a negative effect because students feed off of each other. A group of unmotivated students who are in the same classroom will achieve very little success. The reason for this is that there is no positive peer model in the class for the students to imitate. Everyone in the class is unmotivated and therefore, the possibility of every student doing very little

work is great. On the other hand, a classroom that has all motivated students will produce success because of the positive attitudes of the students in the class. If tracking were to be eliminated, and the slow students were placed in classes with the faster ones, the positive attitudes of the more successful students would have a beneficial affect on the students who may not be motivated.

All students can learn given the opportunity , and tracking does not give this opportunity to all students. Tracking divides students into ability levels which exclude some students from the higher level thinking courses. This, then, creates a situation where some students are not exposed to the many facets of education. For example, students who are tracked in a low level group have very little chance of being exposed to science or algebra courses. Adler (1982) believes that schools divide "children into two tracks, those only destined for labor and those destined for more schooling." (p.12) All children should have the same educational opportunities with the same quantity and the same quality of education.

Desegregated schools have existed for quite some time now. The struggles, the sweat, the heartache, and the time that were spent for this to be accomplished will always be remembered. However, although the battle was won, was it really a victory? There are many issues that have resulted out of desegregating schools, but one of the main issues is black students' perceptions of themselves, their culture, and their race.

The decision to integrate schools may have had a positive influence on some students, but overall desegregation may have taken a toll on more students than imaginable. The effects of integration were not felt by the decision makers but by the students who have to live, operate, and survive by this decision. "Among the white liberals, there is often the implicit or explicit assumption that integration is a positive educational value for the child in the integrated school, and that every negro child in a segregated school is a victim of inferior education." (Crain, 1968, p.110.) This was the overall assumption made by the white advocates for integration who felt that the white only schools had more to offer the black students than the black only schools. The assumption made by the NAACP, black leaders, and the black communities was that by having racially integrated schools, black children would be exposed to the educational facilities and materials that were reserved for white students. Because of selfishness and racism, the black schools were not supplied with the necessary materials needed, and, therefore, the black children received inadequate education.

One argument for integration was that the black children would not be able to feel a sense of self worth being in a segregated setting because being segregated meant not being accepted by the white community. Another argument was that segregated classrooms prevented learning. It was also felt that by integrating the classroom the racial equality symbolized in the classroom would spread to the cities. Another argument was

that integration would help the black children because as long as there were white children in the schools a better education would be provided, thus, the black children would also benefit from this, and their academic skills as well as their social skills would also be enhanced. (Crain,1968, p. 112.)

There was also the belief that being integrated the different races would not only have desegregation but integration, and this would bring the races together and create a unity among them. Kozol (1991) however, has a different opinion. Kozol feels that although schools are integrated, many schools are really comprised of "two separate schools within one building." Kozol also believes that students need to be culturally educated and need to socialize more with different peers of different cultures.

Another argument for integration, according to Crain, (1968) was that a good education would be attained by black students whose school was not receiving the appropriate funding. Because of the inequality of money allotted to the different school areas, black students would be able to get a better education if they attended a white only school that received more than its allotment of funding. What is ironic about this value is that if busing the students into another neighborhood is going to provide them with an efficient education, why can't the money be distributed in the poor neighborhood so that all children would benefit? If all students' education is valued then equal money should be distributed.

To make up for this lack of race identity in the more prestigious positions in the school, black students associate together to feel and maintain a sense of identity. They socialize together given every opportunity and enjoy each other's company. Very seldom are black students seen socializing on a regular basis with members of another race. According to Solomon (1992), very often in schools, groups are formed according to their ethnic or racial backgrounds. Solomon thinks that students' attitudes are more favorable to others who are similar to them. This association and group relationships are strong because the group can identity with each member, and the culture and interest are the same.

Being in this type of environment where every personal value is tested, can bring out negative attitudes in black students. They are unsure of the type of behavior they should display, and in an effort to gain attention or feel like they are in control, the black students adopt negative attitudes. These attitudes are mostly directed at white students, white teachers, and white administrators. As black students socialize together, they put on an air of dominance. Although they mean no harm, they feel that this is their way of competing with the white students. If these students had black role models in their school, who can advise them and guide them in the right direction, their negative attitudes would disappear, as they could learn positive ways to be winners.

Black children constitute 16 percent of the nation's

elementary and secondary school population, while 6.9 percent of the nation's public school teachers are black (Middleton, 1989). According to Middleton, because there are no black teachers to act as role models for the black students, black students will not respect education or its value. In an effort to remedy the negative attitudes of black students, the author suggests taking the students to big cities and to areas and activities where being successful is applauded. The author strongly believes that the presence of role models will counter the negative environment that these students so often encounter in their communities. The mere presence of a black role model is enough to convince the students that education is important and is within their reach.

This positive attitude that will directly and indirectly be taught to them by black role models, would not only help these students in their school life but in their future life. Many of the black youths who have gone astray, have gone because of lack of concrete, positive advice. They had no black role models to look to or seek guidance. Schofield (1989) believes that having black role models within schools would have a positive effect on black students. According to Evans (1992), having minority teachers within the classroom proved to be beneficial to the black students, especially those whose mothers did not attend college. These students used the minority teachers as role models and as sources of inspiration.

Black students need black role models, male and female, who they can look up to. When the presence of a black role model is

not evident, the wrong messages are sent to these students. It is vital that their race have positive role models in schools. The presence of these role models will give the students something to strive for, a goal. Students will also be motivated to learn and achieve. Unless these positive, influential figures are present for the black students to see, black students would not strive to better themselves or aim for a rewarding future.

The curriculum presently being utilized in the public school system is mostly of a cognitive nature. The teachers teach and the students listen. Although there is a turn toward cooperative learning, the teacher directed programs are more prominent. Garlington (1991) found that teachers who stand in front of the class lecturing daily, is subjecting students to boredom and lack of enthusiasm. This type of teaching causes children to lose focus and concentration. Unless students are actively involved, they will continue to be disinterested in school and education. Non-directive learning is necessary, and students should be allowed to work together learning from each other. This form of learning eliminates any inferior complexes that low level students may have. It also allows the students to interact with each other and ask and answer questions. The positive relationship that is formed gives the students a wealth of knowledge, not only academically but culturally.

The curriculum planners neglect to concentrate on the cultural diversity which is constantly growing in this area of the United States. The present curriculum is not designed to

meet the needs of everyone. Because of the many cultural backgrounds, the classroom is filled with students each with a unique history.

Fitzgerald (1993) suggests that the curriculum should represent the culture of all the students attending the school and should consist of hands on activities which focus on the intrinsic values of each culture. Fitzgerald found that when students participated in those types of activities they produced more work of better quality, and they got along well with each other.

Singh (1991) favors cooperative learning to improve classroom climate. Singh believes that when students work together, helping each other, motivating each other, and encouraging each other, self esteem is promoted, and students begin to feel better about themselves.

Jones (1990) recommends building students' self esteem to promote positive attitudes about self and culture. Using the jigsaw method and peer interdependence amongst students in a cooperative fashion, is highly encouraged by Jones. The jigsaw method of cooperative learning consists of all the students in the class being given a number between one and four. Then all of the students with the same number will sit together and work cooperatively. This method eliminates students from only working with friends but with other members of the class also. This form of learning allows the students to become acquainted with other classmates.

For quite some time now, parents have been silent participants in their children's learning process. According to Sandfort (1987), parents need to become more involved in their children's education. A partnership should be developed between the school and the parents, and the school should maintain regular contact with parents about their children. Sandfort found that having a partnership between the school and the parents worked extremely well. The parents were kept abreast of all that was happening at the school. They had input and participated in many discussions, events, and activities that involved the school.

The family and the home environment contributes greatly to the success of students. Through the actions of the family members, children learn who they are and what kind of futures are expected of them. Derman-Sparks (1989) believes that children learn a lot from the family. The family unit is one that is very important to young children. Children rely on it, and they trust the members of the unit. According to Clark (1983), students who do well in school have parents that take the time to enquire about their children's progress in school. The parents of those children who do poorly in school, only visit the school when there is a crisis, and they are requested to see a school personnel in authority. There is a genuine correlation to parental involvement and students success.

Shaffer (1985) deems that teachers who have middle class values do not appreciate the struggles and the difficulties that

students from low-income and low socio-economic backgrounds face. The teachers make negative comments to the students and have low expectations of them. Shaffer is also convinced that teachers before having access to students' academic records, place students in ability grouping according to the clothes they wear, their grooming, and their use of standard English.

According to Neisser (1986), effective teachers expect and demand acceptable accomplishments from every student. The ineffective teacher, however, does not have the same expectations or demands of children from certain ethnic groups. Kong (1991) believes that children from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds have individual differences. These differences are not only linguistic or cultural, either. Kong emphasizes that it is important that teachers, administrators, and counselors be aware of these differences and not treat all of the children in the same regard. Kong strongly stresses that all students cannot be treated alike because the students' success is determined by the treatment they receive in school. In schools, children are grouped according to their age; therefore within a particular classroom, many differences exist among the students.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The writer had the following goal and outcomes for this practicum.

1. The goal was that students would have improved their self esteem, self confidence, and pride.

Expected Outcomes

Outcome One

The first outcome was to make students feel comfortable in their school's surroundings. An initial survey (Appendix A) revealed that students felt uncomfortable at the school and felt a sense of not belonging. The writer's outcome at the end of the practicum was that 23 out of 25 students would have felt more comfortable at the school and would have felt a part of the school. This was to be measured by a post test (Appendix A).

Outcome Two

The second outcome was that 23 out of the 25 students would have achieved self confidence, self esteem and pride. A self esteem pretest (Appendix B), was given at the beginning of

the implementation period. A post test, given at the end of the twelve week period, was used to evaluate and measure the second outcome.

Outcome Three

The second outcome was that four out of five teachers would answer "yes" to the teacher survey. (See Appendix C).

Measurements of Outcomes

The writer's expected outcome was that students would have felt more comfortable in their school's surroundings. This outcome was measured by a post test (Appendix A). The results of the post test were to be compared with the results of the pre test. The second outcome, building students' self esteem, self confidence, and pride, was to be measured by the post test (Appendix B) and through observation by all the students' teachers. The third outcome was to be measured through a teacher survey (Appendix C.)

Chapter 1V

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Many black students at the writer's work location were bused into a school located in a predominantly white neighborhood. These target students lived in poor neighborhoods filled with many socio-economic problems. As they attended school, they were immediately faced with the financial and academic difference of their peers.

Since the writer had no control over the integration of schools, the writer's task was to make the target group of students feel as comfortable as possible in their school's surroundings. This task required that students acquire self esteem, self confidence, and pride.

In order for any child, regardless of race, to learn and achieve in school, it is vital that parents be involved. This involvement includes attending meetings at the school, having parent-teacher conferences, helping students with home work and just basically being a support for the student before, during, and after school. One way that Sandfort (1987) suggests dealing with the problem is to establish a partnership between the school and the parents. Sandfort believes that a concerned parent should not be viewed as a nuisance but rather as a plus to the

school. Maintaining contact between school and parent is vital to all parties involved.

Because the target students had not been exposed to positive role models within their neighborhood, their view of their future and their goals were some what distorted. They had no sense of reaching for the best because they had not been taught by their parents to aim high. This lack of achieving was, therefore, not part of their regime, so they became content to just "get by." "Getting by," however, was not sufficient to becoming a successful person. Therefore, positive role models had to be introduced to these students, so that they could gain a wider scope of where aiming high can land them. According to Evans (1992), black role models have a very positive effect on black students. Through them, the students see hope; they see success.

Allen-Sommerville (1992) suggests that the community becomes involved in its youth. When the community is actively involved, much can be and is achieved that is beneficial to the students, the schools, the parents, and the community, itself. One way that Allen-Sommerville suggests for the involvement is through mentorships. Community members can become mentors for students in schools.

Having a classroom that encourages cooperative learning is one sure way of improving students' self concept and development. Through this strategy many forms of learning take place. Students learn independence, responsibility, team spirit, and

most of all, they learn about their peers and themselves. By having students work in groups, Jones (1990), found that the students developed positive relations and were a support system for each other.

Jones also realized that self esteem and self identity were positive outcomes from cooperative learning groups. The environment became one of care and concern, directed at others and not at self. These types of surroundings build leadership skills and desires in students. The peer interaction exhumes students' respect, respect for themselves as well as their peers. In society, today, respect is definitely needed. With the many diverse cultures, learning to respect others is not only suggested but necessary. The inclusion of multicultural education in the school curriculum, is also mandatory. Through this education much respect will be gained.

Because of the influxes of many cultures to the United States, it is imperative for schools' curriculum to be changed to accommodate the changing population. The importance of students having a multicultural perspective of education is one way of ensuring a well rounded education. Hirsch (1987) believes that it is imperative for students be acculturated. The vast wealth of education that could be achieved should not go unnoticed. Hirsch is also convinced that if students are ignorant about other cultures, their education is incomplete. Incorporating a multicultural curriculum is sure to breed success.

Description of Selected Solution

The solution selected consisted of a variety of ways to make students feel comfortable in an environment that was very different from the one to which they were familiar. Because it is the responsibility of all stake holders that all children learn and that the environment be one that is conducive to learning for all students, this solution to the problem consisted of the participation of many persons. The persons involved were the students, the teachers, the parents, and the community.

Introduction to the diverse cultures and their uniqueness was a major part of the solution strategy. Although the main focus was on the students, teachers, too, were educated about the various cultures. Parents, also, were directly and indirectly educated about the many cultures through their children.

REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN

Because America is a land of many nations, the possibility of a classroom having students of many cultures was great. Schools are culturally diverse. It was important that all students within the class be culturally educated. With this in mind, the writer intended to have cooperative learning groups where students worked together on multicultural materials. This included multicultural literature that was read and discussed. At these times, the groups represented various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The students discussed what they knew about

their culture and the culture of other members of the group. During this time they informed each other about the facts not known. The study and history of various cultures were also discussed, and the students were involved in their own learning and growing. This was through cooperative learning activities aimed at promoting cultural awareness. Students interacted with each other in formal and informal settings. During the implementation period, the students picnicked on the school premises. This type of informal gathering gave them an opportunity to see each other in an environment that was familiar to all. This form of cooperative learning promoted self esteem, self identity, and pride.

In an effort to keep students motivated and aware of the success of members of their culture and race, the writer got the students educated about black authors and black literature. This began with a visit to the library where the librarian presented a lesson which focused on multicultural books and materials that were available in the school. From that period on, every two weeks the students were given a book to read. This book was written by a black author and stressed the black culture. Students were recommended to read, nightly, to their parents. At the end of the two week period, parents signed a form attesting to this. At the end of the implementation period, students turned in a book report on one of the books that they had read.

To implement the strategy, the curriculum was also changed to include multicultural resources. These were books, articles,

and art. These resources were used in conjunction with the required texts. At the end of the implementation period, the students were supposed to bring to class, food that was representative of their culture to share with their classmates. This turned out to be expensive for some, so students brought recipes that were distributed to every student.

Students' success is highly contingent upon teachers' success. Teachers needed to reach a point of cultural awareness. Therefore, a workshop was held at the school's location, to educate teachers on the differences in the various cultures. For students to reach a point of being at ease, teachers, too, had to reach a point of being at ease. They needed to reach a point of cultural understanding. Through this awareness, teachers, hopefully, acquired a knowledge that was beneficial to them by familiarizing them with ways of being sensitive to the different environments from which these students may have arrived. One way that the teachers could have become cognizant, was by attending workshops on cultural differences. The writer arranged these workshops, so that they could be held at the school's location. Through this training, helpful insight, hopefully, was gained by teachers.

It is important that parents be involved in their children's education. The strategy that the writer undertook was more parental involvement. This involvement consisted of a weekly phone call by the writer to inform each parent about the progress or lack of progress of the child. Two parent

conferences were set up every nine weeks. With this much parent contact, the parents were kept abreast of all of the child's performances. Another way that the parents were involved was through volunteering. Parents were invited into the classroom to volunteer or share information with the students. This information could have been about their jobs or their culture. When the parents came to the classroom to volunteer, their children were proud. Having a parent being a part of the school definitely boosted the students' self esteem. A black parent's presence in the classroom promoted the self confidence of all minority students.

The black community's involvement in the school was essential. This gave students the opportunity to be exposed to positive role models. During the implementation period, the writer invited black professionals to address the class. The black professionals from the community consisted of a doctor, an entrepreneur, a teacher, a guidance counselor, an assistant principal, and an executive secretary. When the black students observed positive role models, they were proud. Although the writer did not intend to use members of the community as mentors, the writer did intend to use the members as sources, through visitation to the classroom. Black professionals from the community were invited to address the class. It was imperative that these black students see their own race in prominent positions. These occasions gave the students the opportunities to think about what they wanted to do with their lives,

educationally.

At one point during the implementation period the students participated in an internal field trip where all the students picnicked on the premises to socialize together in a relaxing atmosphere. This time together gave students a chance to see their peers in a different light. The setting was one of comradeship and equity. No one was in a position to feel threatened, since the environment was a familiar and common domain to all students.

The last week of implementation, the students were supposed to bring food representative of their culture to share with the class. However, they only brought recipes because of the expense. They informed the class about the food brought and distributed the recipes. By doing this, the parents, too, were able to try the dishes at home and also learn about the foods of other cultures. Also during that week, students discussed what they had learned during the implementation period. They completed the week by writing thank you letters to the visiting community members, volunteering parents, and all parents that directly and indirectly participated and offered support in the implementation activities. The students then submitted their book reports on one of the books that they had read.

These solutions were beneficial to the students because of the present environment of the school. The activities, although chosen in an effort to promote self esteem, self confidence and pride in black students at the target school, were beneficial to

all students. Through the introduction of the multicultural materials, all students became familiar with the customs of other cultures which was very important, since the classroom had a diverse cultural mixture.

Because it is vital that all students in the class feel a sense of security, belonging and a willingness to learn, with each's individual differences recognized, respected, and accepted, the writer initially focused on cooperative grouping by cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In every group, each student's culture was discussed among them. Students talked about what they knew of their culture and other students' cultures.

Every day, the students were allowed 20 minutes to share something with the group. Each group consisted approximately 5-7 students, and every student was required to inform the members of the group about anything that pertained to that student's culture, regardless of how insignificant it appeared.

During the discussions, many thoughts were shared, and students became very enlightened from their peers' conversations. It was interesting to see that initially many of the black students were reluctant to participate stating that they really did not have anything to share. But when encouraged by peers, they willingly shared and they realized that they, too, had information to which others were eager to listen.

In these groups, also, the students were working together and helping each other out. They discussed the problems and the possible solutions. In the groups, all of the students

participated in the solving process of a problem. Many of the black students who in the past, sat and did nothing in class, were eager to get into groups and work. On many occasions they completed all of the assignment and at times were even seen reading a book or newspaper when finished with their work.

For the entire implementation period the groups stayed together, and the comradeship among them was evident. This friendship did not only extend to the members of the group but to the entire class as well. Communication between them increased.

Parent contact was initiated by the writer from week one. During the initial phone call, parents were told about the communication process between the writer and them. The parents were elated with the contact that kept them informed about their children's progress. Those students who were staying on task, keeping up with their assignments, and exemplifying the appropriate behavior, also received weekly certificates.

The support from the parents was great. Parents were even calling when they noticed that their child had done poorly on an assignment. They were enthusiastic over the entire process and eagerly anticipated working together with the writer.

Because many parents needed to work, they were unable to volunteer in the classroom. Many of them expressed their regrets for not being able to volunteer by calling. Only about two parents were able to volunteer for parts of several days. During those two visits, the parents did not address the class but did answer questions that were asked of them by the students.

The visitation of black professionals to the classroom was enlightening. The visits were from an assistant principal, a teacher, a guidance counselor, and a nurse. A medical doctor was unable to come because of an emergency. However, the doctor did express her regret for not being available.

Having these professionals visit the classroom was very encouraging to the black students. They willingly asked questions and volunteered answers, a task that would not have been done in the past. They were eager to know if and when the visitors would return. As the professionals came, the students greeted them warmly, and after each session made very positive remarks in reference to their own goals and future.

To enhance students' knowledge about the black culture, the students visited the library. The librarian presented a lesson which focused on the many multicultural books and materials that the library offers. Students were familiar with the books that focused on many other cultures.

An internal field trip was planned but had to be postponed because of poor weather conditions. All of the students were disappointed but were elated when they actually did have the opportunity to picnic. Having the picnic gave students a chance to socialize together in a relaxing atmosphere. The picnic lasted for approximately one and one half hours. During this time, the students shared stories and told jokes. Everyone was taking part in the activities. Some students were performing by singing and reciting poetry. The overall activity was very

rewarding. There were no arguments. The students played well together.

The presentations done by the students showed the work that they had put into writing the paper. As the students presented their work to the class, there was pride in their voices. The presentations were well organized and presented. As the students presented their work, they used props to emphasize and enhance the presentation. Some students even dressed as the characters in their books.

One plan that did not materialized, however, was the plan where each student bought in food to share with the class. This turned out to be too expensive for some parents, so instead the students did research on a food representative of their culture and each member of the group shared the information they had gathered. The teacher bought drinks and cookies which were just as acceptable by the students. Although they were many parents that were unable to volunteer, the students still wrote letters to all parents. Letters were also written to members of the community who gave of their time to visit the classroom.

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RESULTS

The majority of the black students at the writer's work location, were bused into the school which is located in a predominantly white neighborhood. Many of the 25 target students came from poor neighborhoods, where most members of the households had little education and faced socio-economic problems. The members of these households had many everyday predicaments to contend with which allowed them little time to be involved in the overall education of their children.

As the students came into a middle class neighborhood to attend school, they encountered peers who not only appeared to be financially better off but academically better off, as well. Many times the local students were also receiving better grades. Having to confront this feeling of inferiority on a daily basis was having a negative effect on the target students. The target group, for lack of parental guidance and involvement, did not know how to handle the various differences they encountered in school. Therefore, they adopted negative attitudes towards their peers, their teachers, and negative feeling about themselves.

At the end of the implementation period, a post test survey (Appendix A) was given to the students. The results of the survey proved that the students felt better about themselves.

When asked how they felt about the school, 24 of 25 students said they liked the school. Twenty of 25 students said they felt comfortable at the school. Seventeen students felt a sense of belonging. Eight still did not feel a sense of belonging but noted that they felt better than they did previously. None of the students said they felt inferior at the school. All students said they associated with both races now. Twenty of 25 students felt that their white friends did not treat them differently.

RESULTS OF POST TEST SURVEY

QUESTION	YES	NO
1. How do you feel about the school? I like it. I do not like it.	24	1
2. Do you feel comfortable at this school?	25	0
3. Do you feel a sense of belonging at this school?	17	8
4. Do you feel inferior at this school?	0	25
5. Do you like your peers?	20	0
Tolerate them?	5	0

QUESTION	YES	NO
6. Do you associate with:		
Mostly black students?	5	0
Mostly white students?	0	0
All races?	20	0
7. Do your white peers treat you differently than your black peers?	5	20
8. Do you feel comfortable asking questions in the class?	25	0
9. Do your teachers encourage you to do your work?	22	3

Twenty-two of the 25 students felt that their teachers encouraged them to do their work.

A self esteem survey (Appendix B) was given to the students. The results show the improvement of the students' self esteem over the implementation period.

RESULTS OF SELF ESTEEM SURVEY

QUESTION	YES	NO
1. Do you like yourself?	25	0
2. Do you think that you do your best in school?	17	8
3. Is success important to you?	25	0

QUESTION	YES	NO
4. Do you think that you are a better person than your classmate?	25	0
5. Are you equally as good as your classmate?	25	0
6. Do you take pride in yourself?	18	7
7. Do you take pride in who you are?	20	5
8. Do you think that you can be yourself at this school?	14	11
9. Do you think that you have a talent?	6	19
10. At this school do you think that you have the opportunity to show or express your talent?	23	2
11. Would like an opportunity to show and express your talent?	10	15

Teachers were also given a survey (Appendix C) in reference to black students after the implementation period. The results of the survey indicated that the students had improved academically as well as socially.

RESULTS OF TEACHER SURVEY

QUESTION	YES	NO
1. Do you see an improvement in black students' attitudes during the last 12 weeks?	5	0
2. Are black students paying more attention and completing assignments in class?	5	0
3. Are black students in the class socializing with all peers?	5	0

DISCUSSIONS

The implementation period served to be beneficial to all students. The students learned from each other and gained a better understanding of each other and each other's culture. The relationship between them has improved tremendously since the implementation period. They now communicate effectively together, and help each other out.

The strenuous relationship that once existed between the black and white students no longer exists. They now socialize together in the classroom, in the hallways, and in the cafeteria. The positive difference can be easily noticed, as they seem to be enjoying each other's friendship.

Not only has a friendship developed between them but an interest in learning, a sense of responsibility, and a love of self and others have also been established among the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer recommends that all students and teachers be exposed to various cultures and their uniqueness. The advantages that can be gained by all are tremendous, and everyone's overall perceptions, knowledge, and education would be so wide based, that all prejudices or biases will be eliminated because of this exposure. When this is lacking, students begin to feel a sense of not belonging, and many problems, which can have devastating effects, can arise. Being informed is crucial, crucial to the teachers, crucial to the staff, crucial to the community, and most of all, crucial to the students.

DISSEMINATION

The report will be distributed to all teachers on the sixth grade teams, and a copy will be placed in the library for other teachers' review.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRETEST/POSTTEST

SURVEY

1. How do you feel about the school?

   a. I like it b. I do not like it

2. Do you feel comfortable at this school?

   a. Yes b. No

3. Do you feel a sense of belonging at this school?

   a. Yes b. No

4. Do you feel inferior at this school?

   a. Yes b. No

5. Do you like your peers?

   a. Yes b. No c. tolerate them

6. Do you associate with:

   a. Mostly black students b. Mostly white students

7. Do your white peers treat you differently than your black peers?

   a. Yes b. No

8. Do you feel comfortable asking questions in the class?

   a. Yes b. No

9. Do your teachers encourage you to do your work?

a. Yes b. No

APPENDIX B

PRETEST/POSTTEST SELF ESTEEM SURVEY

Self Esteem Survey

1. Do you like yourself?
   a) Yes b) no

2. Do you think that you do your best in school?
   a) Yes b) no

3. Is success important to you?
   a) Yes b) no

4. Do you think that you are a better person than your classmate?
   a) Yes b) no

5. Are you equally as good as your classmate?
   a) Yes b) no

6. Do you take pride in yourself?
   a) Yes b) no

7. Do you take pride in who you are?
   a) Yes b) no

8. Do you think that you can be yourself at this school?
   a) Yes b) no

9. Do you think that you have a talent?

a) Yes b) no

10. At this school do you think that you have the opportunity to show or express your talent?

a) Yes b) no

11. Would like an opportunity to show and express your talent?

a) Yes b) no

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher Survey

1. Do you see an improvement in black students' attitudes during the last 12 weeks?

a) Yes b) No

2. Are black paying more attention and completing assignments in class?

a) Yes b) No

3. Are black students in the class socializing with all peers?

a) Yes b) No